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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in that country

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the request of the Security Council contained in the statement issued by its President on 26 September 2001 (S/PRST/2001/25), in which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed of the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and the situation in that country.

2. The report builds on my previous report (S/2010/584), dated 19 November 2010, and provides an update on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), which succeeded BONUCA on 1 January 2010, and on the political, security, socio-economic, humanitarian and human rights developments in that country. It also provides an update on efforts to strengthen the ongoing integration process in the mission.

II. Political situation

3. The reporting period was dominated by the first round of legislative and presidential elections, held on 23 January, and the second round of legislative elections, held on 27 March. The holding of elections, the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of combatants of politico-military groups and security sector reform were three of the principal recommendations arising from the inclusive political dialogue of December 2008, which sought to lead the country from a period of instability to the building of national unity around a *democratically* elected, inclusive Government.

4. The Follow-up Committee on the recommendations arising from the inclusive political dialogue met for the last time from 22 to 25 November, to review the progress made in the implementation of the recommendations. The Committee noted that little progress had been made since its last meeting, on 29 September. Of the 116 recommendations that had arisen from the inclusive political dialogue, approximately 45 per cent had been implemented. The outstanding unimplemented recommendations related predominantly to the obligations of the Government of the

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Central African Republic in the security sector. It had been agreed that the mandate of the Committee would expire after the elections, and the Committee therefore ceased to function.

5. Some progress was made during the reporting period on bringing the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP), the only politico-military group that did not sign the 2008 Libreville peace accords, into the peace process. Following overtures by President François Bozizé, the leadership of CPJP announced on 26 April that it was ready to accept a ceasefire and begin discussions with the Government. Prior to that announcement, there had been numerous clashes between CPJP and the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA), the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR) and self-defence militias across the north of the Central African Republic, resulting in a number of civilian and combatant casualties.

Elections

6. The presidential election was held on 23 January, while the legislative elections were held in two rounds, on 23 January and 27 March. Following his victory in the presidential elections, President Bozizé was sworn in for a second five-year term on 15 March. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by the Heads of State of Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon and by members of the diplomatic corps. In accordance with the Constitution, the Government of Prime Minister Faustin Archange Touadera resigned on 18 March. Mr. Touadera was subsequently reconfirmed in the post of Prime Minister on 17 April and a new Government was announced on 22 April.

7. One of the goals of the elections was to bring the people of the Central African Republic together to democratically choose their next leaders. The environment in which the elections were held was therefore an important part of the process; overall, the entire process took place in a peaceful atmosphere. However, there were reportedly a few incidents between supporters of different factions and some elements for concern in the electoral process itself, including the detention of some opposition figures; the use of inciteful language; and the placement of travel restrictions on some opposition leaders, notably former President Ange-Félix Patassé. Mr. Patassé was twice denied medical evacuation to Equatorial Guinea, on 23 and 30 March, despite an appeal made by my Special Representative in the Central African Republic to President Bozizé on 26 March. Restrictions on the movement of opposition figures were lifted on 31 March. On 2 April, former President Patassé travelled to Cameroon, where he died in hospital on 5 April.

8. The elections were materially assisted by the European Union, which committed $12 million from a basket of funds of $14.7 million managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Additional donors included Belgium, France, Germany, Japan, Nigeria and Poland, as well as the African Union. Funds were also made available through the Peacebuilding Fund of the United Nations. The Governments of the Central African Republic and France, as well as UNDP, paid for the operating costs of the Independent Electoral Commission. The total budget of the elections was approximately $21.5 million.

9. On 15 November 2010, President Bozizé chaired an important meeting of all stakeholders in the national elections, during which a decision was made not to use a computerized list of voters. The decision to use a paper-based list had a number of

implications, the most significant of which was the inability of the Independent Electoral Commission to post and revise the lists of voters ahead of the election day.

10. After the period for the registration of candidates was altered and extended, five candidates finally contested the presidential election: the incumbent President, Mr. Bozizé, leader of the Kwa na Kwa (KNK) ruling party; the former President, Mr. Patassé, running as an independent candidate; Martin Ziguélé, leader of the Mouvement pour la libération du peuple centrafricain (MLPC); Jean-Jacques Demafouth, leader of both the Nouvelle alliance pour le progrès (NAP) and the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD), a politico-military group; and Emile Gros Raymond Nakombo, leader of the Rassemblement démocratique centrafricain (RDC).

11. A total of 889 candidates representing 41 parties ran for the 105 seats of the National Assembly. The candidates included 271 independents and 80 women. In addition to the Prime Minister, 15 of 32 ministers ran for a seat in the National Assembly.

12. Amid concerns about the Independent Electoral Commission's preparations for the elections, Jean Wilybiro Sacko, the Ambassador of the Central African Republic to France and President of the Commission in 2005, returned to Bangui on 21 November to take up the post of Minister for Territorial Administration and Decentralization, heading the ministry responsible for overseeing elections on behalf of the Government. On 29 December 2010, the Collectif des forces du changement (CFC), a coalition of opposition parties, called for the elections to be postponed, arguing that arrangements would not be in place in time for the 23 January elections.

13. On 4 January, opposition leaders threatened to withdraw from both the presidential and the legislative elections, stating that electoral lists had not been posted early enough to allow for challenges and amendments. Despite that threat, representatives of all political parties, politico-military groups, State institutions and civil society organizations signed a code of good conduct for political life in the Central African Republic on 7 January. During the preparatory period, there were real concerns that politico-military groups might exert pressure on voters or disrupt preparations through violence. However, there were very few incidents and no casualties were reported. The materials were transported to regional hubs in the provinces by FACA and the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX), a subregional peacekeeping force, almost without incident.

14. All political parties, including in the opposition, participated in the electoral campaign from 10 to 21 January. The High Communication Council played an important role, encouraging the parties to communicate in accordance with the electoral code and to avoid inciting violence.

15. The first round of presidential and legislative elections in the Central African Republic was held, as scheduled, on 23 January. There was a strong voter turnout, estimated by the Independent Electoral Commission at 54 per cent of the 1.8 million registered voters, and the process was conducted in a peaceful atmosphere. The elections were observed across the country by approximately 70 observers from the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of Central

African States and the non-governmental organization Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy, as well as 500 national observers. The European Union sent a two-person technical evaluation team. Representatives of all parties and candidates monitored the proceedings within the polling stations.

16. On 25 January, CFC called a press conference in which it alleged that there had been massive fraud on election day and serious irregularities and shortcomings in the way the polls had been conducted. Four of the opposition representatives resigned from their posts in the Independent Electoral Commission on 26 January, alleging fraud in the processing of the election results. International and national observers highlighted the inclusive nature of the elections, the high voter turnout and the peaceful atmosphere in which the elections had been conducted. They also noted a number of irregularities and shortcomings in the proceedings, including the inaccuracy of voters' lists, the insufficient training of electoral staff and the high rate of absentee voting.

17. On 1 February, the Independent Electoral Commission announced the provisional results of the presidential election, which were slightly adjusted by the Constitutional Court on 12 February to take into account additional results from polling stations that had not previously been counted. President Bozizé received 64 per cent of the votes, eliminating the need for a run-off and paving the way for his second and, according to the Constitution, final five-year presidential term. Former President Patassé came second, with 21 per cent of the votes, and Mr. Ziguélé received 6 per cent of the votes. The other challengers, Mr. Nakombo and Mr. Demafouth, won 4 and 2 per cent of the votes, respectively.

18. In its ruling of 12 February, the Constitutional Court rejected for lack of evidence the appeals made by three opposition candidates to annul the presidential election, and made recommendations to improve the organization of future polls and enhance their transparency and credibility. The Court proposed the creation of a permanent independent administrative body; that elections be funded by the national budget; the computerization of voters' lists; and the introduction of voters' cards containing biometric information. On 29 April, the new Minister for Territorial Administration and Decentralization announced the Government's intention to create a permanent administrative body within the Independent Electoral Commission.

19. On 6 February, the Independent Electoral Commission issued the results of legislative elections, which gave KNK 26 seats, the opposition 1 seat and independent candidates 8 seats. The four unsuccessful presidential candidates had also stood as candidates for the National Assembly, but only Mr. Ziguélé advanced to the second round of the vote. President Bozizé, several members of his family, senior Government officials and KNK figures were among the winners in the first round.

20. On 4 March, the Front pour l'annulation et la reprise des élections (FARE) was formed by CFC members and former President Patassé. FARE called for the results of the first round of elections to be cancelled, the withdrawal of opposition candidates and a popular boycott of the second round of legislative elections. The National Mediator, Archbishop Paulin Pomodimo, urged the opposition to participate.

21. On 27 March, the second round of legislative elections was held in 67 electoral districts, and a number of opposition candidates stood for election. The elections incorporated a number of corrective measures to address irregularities and

shortcomings noted by observers and the opposition in the first round of elections. A smaller number of international and national observers noted a far smaller voter turnout, partially attributable to the opposition boycott but also to general voter fatigue.

22. The results of the second round of legislative elections were announced on 6 April: the ruling KNK party won 37 more seats; independent candidates won a further 18 seats; candidates from parties allied with KNK won 11 seats and one other opposition candidate won 1 seat. The Constitutional Court received a number of appeals calling for the cancellation of the results of the first round of legislative elections and, as of early May, the Court had examined 55 of 88 appeals and ruled that elections should be repeated in 13 constituencies.

23. The UNDP electoral assistance project played an important role in supporting the Independent Electoral Commission in the provision of expertise, technical assistance and support during the voter registration process and the two rounds of the elections. The project contributed to solving the serious logistical issues that arose in the course of the preparations, including by finalizing the transcription of voters' lists, facilitating the transfer of 7,000 ballot boxes from Togo and preparing a package of corrective measures for the second round of legislative elections to address irregularities noted in the first round.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

24. The disarmament and demobilization of former combatants in the north-western and north-eastern areas of the Central African Republic has not yet started owing to a combination of factors: a lack of political will, continued insecurity resulting from the absence of national security forces in those areas, especially following the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) from the north-east, and major logistical challenges posed by the rainy season. Following consultations with the minister in charge of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the UNDP Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Management Unit drew down its programme capacity on 1 March. The Unit has maintained the technical and financial capacity it would need to reactivate its support to the Government if and when conditions become conducive to start the process in earnest.

25. Despite delays in the actual implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, considerable progress was made in the development of a national reintegration strategy for former combatants. On 10 December 2010, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Steering Committee approved the establishment of the Working Group on Reintegration to facilitate the development of a national strategy for the reintegration of former combatants. The Working Group developed a draft national reintegration strategy that was presented to the Steering Committee on 22 February, indicating a significant commitment by key national stakeholders to developing a strategy within the framework of the current disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

26. On 13 January, the President signed a decree appointing six disarmament, demobilization and reintegration technical advisers to the presidency: two from APRD and one from each of the other politico-military groups: UFDR, the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC), the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) and the Union des forces républicaines (UFR).

These appointments appear to have served the dual purpose of contributing to calming the atmosphere on the ground during the electoral process and reinforcing the commitment to making further progress.

27. Given the limited availability of military personnel to support the process, there has been some debate during the reporting period about whether disarmament, demobilization and reintegration should commence in the north-west of the country or whether the verification of combatants should begin in the north-east. The APRD leader and his field commanders on the ground have indicated that their group is ready for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the north-west. However, the expiration of the mandate of the MICOPAX military observers on 10 June will further constrain efforts to carry out the programme in both areas simultaneously.

28. A mission comprising representatives of FACA, MICOPAX and the UFDR and MLCJ politico-military groups was carried out in the north-east from 28 February to 9 March to assess whether the conditions were in place for the verification process to start. The mission participants concluded that verification could go ahead while noting the fragile security situation in that area. In the light of renewed violence in the area, another planning mission was carried out in the north-east on 30 April to review with all parties their ability to proceed with the verification. Since the list of combatants in the north-west was validated, no date has been set for the start of the actual disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in that area.

Security sector reform

29. Progress was made in the area of security sector reform during the reporting period. Ministerial- and technical-level meetings resumed on a regular basis to revive the security sector reform process and define a national vision and way forward with support from the newly established Security Institutions Unit within BINUCA. Preparation of the security sector reform components of the poverty reduction strategy paper for 2011-2015, also known as the second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper, has been a main priority of the technical working group. However, a lack of consensus at both the technical and political levels has hindered the development of a robust and credible security sector reform strategy.

30. BINUCA has also worked to improve the accountability of the security sector by deploying an international expert to support the ministry responsible for relations with the National Assembly in developing a subsectoral strategy on parliamentary control of the security forces. The strategy provides a clear set of priorities and a plan for implementation over the next three years. That document, together with other subsectoral strategies, could serve as a starting point for the development of a much-needed national security sector reform strategy that builds on the foundations already put in place at the national seminar on security sector reform of April 2008.

31. BINUCA is supporting security sector reform through training and other practical projects aimed at enhancing the professionalism of the police, gendarmerie and FACA. During the reporting period, BINUCA conducted training activities for national police and gendarmes in the management of traffic and command and control. BINUCA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also led a campaign within FACA to promote ethics and human rights and will provide training to military engineers and medical personnel. In addition, BINUCA and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) are providing advice and support to national authorities to implement a project funded

by the Peacebuilding Fund aimed at building six barracks for the defence and security forces in order to ensure that these projects fit within a broader security sector reform framework.

III. Military and security situation

32. The military and security situation has been characterized by frequent, violent attacks perpetrated by CPJP, foreign rebel elements, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and bandits and poachers operating in the country. While the areas around the capital and in the west of the country remained predominantly calm, the eastern and northern parts of the country continued to experience violence throughout the reporting period.

33. On 24 November 2010, CPJP, supported by Chadian rebels, attacked and seized the town of Birao, the capital of the north-eastern Vakaga region, just a few days after the withdrawal of MINURCAT, causing the temporary displacement of 8,000 people. On 30 November, elements of the Chadian armed forces entered the country to support FACA operations and expel CPJP from Birao. The Chadian forces stayed to secure the area around Birao until 14 February, following the elections. A further 300 FACA troops have since been deployed to Birao to help secure the town and the surrounding area.

34. CPJP was active across the north-east of the country. On 7 and 24 February, it clashed with FACA troops near Bria, in the Haute-Kotto region, and temporarily seized control of the main road linking Birao with the south of the country. On 14 February, MICOPAX deployed an additional contingent for a period of six months to Ndélé, in the Bamingui-Bangoran region, where CPJP is active. From 20 to 22 March, then from 10 to 12 April, FACA troops supported by UFDR forces clashed with CPJP forces in the Bamingui-Bangoran and Vakaga regions. In addition to causing an unconfirmed number of casualties and significant destruction, those clashes have increased tensions between the Gula and Rounga ethnic groups, which dominate UFDR and CPJP, respectively.

35. The average number of LRA attacks decreased by nearly half during the reporting period and LRA groups previously operating in the north-east of the country appear to have left. Attacks in the south-east are perpetrated by LRA elements believed to be based on the other side of the Oubangui river, in the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Approximately 19,000 Central Africans are still displaced in the south-eastern Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou regions as a result of LRA activity. The Uganda People's Defence Forces contingent continues to withdraw its forces and an estimated 800 troops now remain in the south-east of the Central African Republic.

IV. Socio-economic situation

36. The Central African Republic's perceived fragility, the lack of infrastructure, the poor business environment and the resulting low levels of investment continue to affect the economic situation adversely. Despite these challenges, economic recovery is slowly taking place and the real growth estimates for 2010 is 3.3 per cent. The Government successfully kept inflation at 1.5 per cent in 2010, down from 3.5 per cent in 2009. The volume of exports increased by 9.2 per cent and imports

increased by 11.5 per cent, leaving a trade deficit for 2011 of 7.8 per cent of the gross domestic product.

37. The economic and financial programme supported by the International Monetary Fund's Extended Credit Facility, previously known as the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility, was successfully completed in September 2010. A successor programme supported by the Extended Credit Facility is expected to be negotiated in the coming months. The country has maintained macroeconomic stability and made good progress in implementing financial and structural reforms. These measures have helped to establish the conditions to resume sustained economic growth but the country remains vulnerable to increasing fuel and food prices. Fiscal policy remains on track and consistent with macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability. Reforms in the taxation of the oil sector and in tax and customs collections have improved revenue; however, the implementation of these reforms has not been consistent.

38. The second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper will be presented at a donor round table organized by the Government of the Central African Republic with the support of the Peacebuilding Commission, UNDP, the World Bank and the African Development Bank to be held in June 2011 in Brussels. The Government plans to focus on alleviating poverty and driving growth in the agricultural sector over the next five years.

V. Humanitarian situation

39. The humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic during the reporting period remained fragile due to displacement caused by the activities of armed groups, the threat of or actual violence and logistical constraints to accessing remote areas.

40. There are approximately 21,000 refugees and asylum-seekers and an estimated 192,000 internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic. In the Bamingui-Bangoran region, access to approximately 15,000 internally displaced persons from Ndélé remains difficult due to frequent clashes between CPJP and FACA, UFDR and self-defence militias.

41. Humanitarian access remains a major challenge in the northern and eastern parts of the country. While humanitarian negotiations with politico-military groups could allow the opening of humanitarian access, the threat posed by CPJP and heavily armed criminals remains, posing security problems for humanitarian workers operating in those areas. The United Nations has been actively involved in negotiating humanitarian access with different parties. In February, FDPC armed elements abducted eight humanitarian staff from Médecins sans frontières Spain in the Ouham region. Central African humanitarian workers were quickly released but two international staff were kept as hostages for 10 days, until their release was negotiated.

42. The United Nations country team continues to be engaged in efforts to address the dire humanitarian situation on the ground for internally displaced persons, refugees and other vulnerable people. The World Food Programme (WFP) assisted some 420,000 vulnerable and conflict-affected people with food commodities and ensured appropriate complementary feeding for 7,800 malnourished children under

5 years of age, 320,000 pupils and 7,500 pregnant and nursing mothers, as well as 12,000 people living in food-insecure households affected by HIV/AIDS. In order to address the immediate health needs of internally displaced persons and refugees, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided minimum initial service packages to prevent and manage the consequences of sexual violence, reduce infant and maternal mortality and help prevent HIV transmission.

43. In November 2010, UNHCR relocated 1,751 Sudanese refugees from a refugee camp near Sam Ouandja in the Haute-Kotto region, near the border with the Sudan, to a more secure camp in Bambari, in the central Ouaka region. To enhance the protection of refugees, UNHCR worked jointly with the Commission nationale pour les réfugiés to establish a strategy and action plan to provide better security and protection for refugees and helped build the capacity of the Commission to determine the status of refugees and manage a refugee database.

44. There is a critical lack of humanitarian funding due to donor fatigue, difficult access and the low absorption capacity of stakeholders. Only 45 per cent of the Consolidated Appeals Process for the Central African Republic for 2010 was funded, against assessed needs of $129 million. The Common Humanitarian Fund mobilized $12 million for 2010, a large percentage of which was allocated to 22 projects to be implemented in 2011 to cover acute needs in the south-east and north-east of the country. As at 30 April, 27.5 per cent of the Consolidated Appeals Process for the Central African Republic for 2011 had been funded. Early in 2011, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator granted the country $5 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund's allocation for under-funded emergencies.

VI. Operational activities in support of recovery and development

45. The operations of the United Nations country team have focused on averting the need for further humanitarian interventions and trying to establish some foundations for sustainable growth and development.

46. During the reporting period, WFP facilitated the restoration, protection and improvement of livelihoods of about 10,800 people in areas recovering from conflict through the distribution of food. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued its agricultural programme of emergency operations through the distribution of agricultural tools and seeds, the management of lowland, and the provision of training and capacity-building opportunities for farmer associations. FAO also supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, with its rural development and food security strategy document, which is one of the efforts to eliminate poverty and hunger in Africa. On 15 April, the Government signed a country compact agreement as part of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

47. In the health sector, several initiatives led by the World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), including immunization and vaccination campaigns, have contributed to preventing and mitigating epidemics and diseases, including polio, yellow fever and malaria. The Government of the Central

African Republic, which spends on average only 1.5 per cent of its gross domestic product on public health, is extremely dependent on foreign assistance to meet the basic health needs of its population.

48. The United Nations country team has also been actively engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Central African Republic. According to the third round of a multiple indicator cluster survey, which was carried out in 2006, the prevalence of infection was 6.2 per cent in the country. Nonetheless, in the course of preparing a national strategic framework to address HIV/AIDS, preliminary results from the fourth round of the survey suggest that the situation is improving and that the rate should now stand at 4.7 per cent.

49. In 2010, UNICEF coordinated with the Ministry of Education and national and international non-governmental organizations to bring 306,557 schoolchildren back to primary school in conflict-affected regions, compared with the 145,152 schoolchildren who were brought back in 2009. A parent-teacher training programme has made it possible to build the capacity of 2,179 parent-teachers, improving the learning performances of children affected by crisis in 673 schools. In 2011, 24 new classrooms have already been constructed and equipped.

50. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has continued to support activities and initiatives aimed at promoting a culture of peace, including the installation of two community radios in Paoua and Birao and the training of radio staff.

51. The World Bank had secured $10 million to support community recovery programmes, focusing on livelihood support and public works in areas with a high concentration of former combatants in conflict-affected areas in the north of the country, which will be implemented by five international non-governmental organizations in close collaboration with local and national authorities.

VII. Human rights and the rule of law

52. The human rights situation remains characterized by pervasive human rights violations and abuses perpetrated with impunity by law enforcement agents and non-State actors across the country. In the north, chronic displacement and the absence of protection of civilians have led to increased incidents of human rights abuses by armed groups. In the north-east, the conflict between different ethnic groups has led to extensive human rights abuse, including summary executions. Popular justice and accusations of witchcraft, often targeting young girls or elderly women, unfortunately continue throughout the country.

53. The judicial system continues to suffer from a lack of basic infrastructure and human resources. Courts are housed in dilapidated buildings and there are fewer than 200 magistrates in the entire country. Prisons are overcrowded and lack sanitary facilities. Two thirds of prisoners have been in pretrial detention for an average of three months or more and malnutrition causes death among prisoners in most prisons and detention centres. The day-to-day management of prisons is still in the hands of the security forces and does not meet basic international norms and standards on the treatment of prisoners. The United Nations continues to work with national partners to support the adoption of a new legislative package on prison management that takes into account international norms and standards. Two new

prisons are being built and others are being renovated, reintegration programmes for offenders are being developed and 46 registrars and correctional officers, including 32 women, have been recruited and are currently being trained.

54. The Government has taken some important steps to address these issues through the adoption of important human rights legislation. On 13 December 2010, as a result of sustained advocacy by UNHCR, the National Assembly authorized the ratification of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. Following the ratification of the International Labour Organization Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (Convention No. 169) in August 2010, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Good Governance of the Central African Republic initiated, on 13 January, a sensitization campaign in areas home to Pygmies and other marginalized populations.

55. BINUCA and UNDP continued to provide assistance to the Ministry of Justice in the implementation of its national strategy, its 10-year justice reform programme, and established a rule-of-law working group. UNDP, through its project on strengthening the rule of law, completed in March the construction of five "houses of law" to provide people with an educational forum through which to understand the rule of law and meet with lawyers for better access to justice. Several seminars and workshops have also been held for members of the justice system and civil society to assist in explaining the new body of criminal law that had recently been adopted.

VIII. Gender issues

56. Since my last report, the United Nations has continued to support the efforts of the Government and civil society organizations to promote equality between men and women, particularly to increase women's political participation and fight against sexual and gender-based violence in compliance with Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), on women and peace and security.

57. In January and February, BINUCA provided technical support to women candidates during the legislative elections through meetings with individuals and small groups on how to develop self-confidence and conduct effective electoral campaigns for the first and second round of the elections. Of the 80 women who were candidates for the legislative elections, 11 were elected. Six women subsequently became part of the new Government, an increase of two women ministers compared with the previous Government. The United Nations also contributed to the launch of a day dedicated to advocating women's participation in decision-making as part of the celebration of International Women's Day, on 8 March.

58. From 21 to 23 December 2010, BINUCA assisted a local women's organization in launching awareness campaigns on violence against women and children in the Commune du Zaire, in the conflict-affected region of Nana-Gribizi, for 100 women victims in the community. The campaigns were followed by a two-day training course for local authorities aimed at making them more effective in preventing and treating cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

59. Furthermore, UNFPA technical and financial support enabled the Government to develop a national gender equality strategy that was adopted in February. UNFPA

and the United Nations thematic group on gender have supported the Government in revising the 1997 Family Code; a draft of the revised text is now waiting for final approval by the Government before it can be adopted by the National Assembly. The Code aims to improve respect for women's rights, reduce gender-based violence and prohibit the marriage of girls under 18.

IX. Child protection

60. Domestic and foreign armed groups operating in the Central African Republic continue to be responsible for grave violations against children, especially in the north and east of the country. Among the grave violations reported are abductions, the use of child soldiers, sexual violence, attacks on schools and denial of access for humanitarian purposes. Domestic and foreign armed groups continue to use children. While I am encouraged by the release of children from the ranks of APRD, I note with concern that all of the seven parties that have been listed since 2007 in my annual reports on children and armed conflict have yet to develop individual, concrete and time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

61. Cases of rape and sexual abuse continue to be underreported for several reasons, including lack of faith in the justice system, fear of reprisal and public stigmatization. Abductions of children by LRA were reported following attacks on towns and villages in the regions of Haut-Mbomou, Mbomou, Haute-Kotto and Vakaga. Verification activities continued to be limited due to security, logistics and capacity constraints.

62. During the reporting period, UNICEF continued to work closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross to repatriate children formerly associated with LRA. In January, a second cross-border coordination meeting of United Nations child protection focal points in LRA-affected countries was held in Kampala to revise the United Nations operational plan for cross-border repatriation, family reunification and care of children who had escaped or had been rescued from LRA, on the basis of lessons learned since the plan was adopted in Nairobi in October 2009.

63. Efforts led by the Government to promote child protection continued, including with the establishment in April 2011 of a national inter-ministerial council for child protection to coordinate and oversee the implementation of all existing and new child protection-related policies. The United Nations and civil society organizations will be providing technical advice to the council. Other governmental efforts include the organization by the Ministry for Social Affairs of a seminar to validate the second periodic report of the Central African Republic on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which will be submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child once it has been endorsed by the Government. In the report, the Government reviews the measures it has taken to align national legislation with the provisions of the Convention, as well as measures on parental responsibility, health, education and special protection, including for children in conflict with the law and children from minority groups.

64. The United Nations provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Justice in an evaluation of the justice system for children, as well as to the Tribunal for Children in Bangui and the Judicial Police to provide legal assistance to

120 children, including 51 girls. In addition, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization has been preparing, with the support of the United Nations, the organization of a national forum on birth registration, to be held from 18 to 24 July 2011, in order to adopt a national strategy and action plan that would ensure that all children, including those born in conflict-affected areas, are registered at birth.

X. Activities of the Peacebuilding Commission

65. Jan Grauls, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, visited the Central African Republic from 6 to 10 April to assess progress in the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in that country. In his meetings with President Bozizé, members of the Government and national and international stakeholders, the Chair discussed progress made in the process of consolidating peace in the country, the remaining challenges, the development of the second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper and preparations for the donor round table to be held in June.

66. The Chair also visited Batangafo, in the north-western region of Ouham, to assess progress in the implementation by the Danish Refugee Council of two peace consolidation projects financed by the Peacebuilding Fund to establish legal clinics and train teacher-parents.

67. With regard to the second-generation poverty reduction strategy, the Chair stressed the importance of integrating a peacebuilding dimension into the strategy. This would allow the Peacebuilding Commission to engage with the Central African Republic beyond 2011 using the framework set out in that strategy. On 16 February, the Peacebuilding Commission held a meeting with the Minister for Planning, Economy and International Cooperation and my Special Representative to discuss ongoing preparations for the strategy.

68. The Peacebuilding Commission has also initiated a resource-mapping exercise to identify gaps in funding for priority areas identified in the Strategic Framework. I welcome the fact that, in all his engagements, the Chair has maintained contact with my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and advocated for the Central African Republic to be added to the latter's list of priority countries.

XI. Peacebuilding Fund

69. In 2010, the Central African Republic received a second allocation of $20 million for the implementation of peacebuilding priorities. During the reporting period, the Joint Steering Committee completed the selection and approval of 15 projects to consolidate the peacebuilding process. In the Committee's revised priority plan, the second allocation focuses on the rule of law, security sector reform and support to conflict-affected communities in the context of the development hubs programme. Approximately two thirds of the funds are dedicated to strengthening the capacities of the army, the police and the justice system in the regions, notably through the construction of barracks, prisons and other infrastructure. Microfinance, training for youth at risk and the electoral process also received support. Eight

United Nations agencies, funds and programmes (FAO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNOPS and WFP) are engaged in peacebuilding activities through different projects financed by the Fund, while international and national non-governmental organizations have acted as implementing partners in areas where the United Nations maintains a limited presence.

70. The implementation of projects approved by the Fund under the first allocation, of $10 million, is almost complete, with an average implementation rate of over 90 per cent.

XII. Integration and a common United Nations vision for the Central African Republic

71. BINUCA and the United Nations country team continue to strengthen cooperation through a number of joint planning and programming initiatives. Following the completion of an integrated strategic framework in November 2010, BINUCA and the country team are now implementing the framework's action plan for 2011.

72. In developing the United Nations Development and Peacebuilding Assistance Framework for 2012-2016, BINUCA and the country team made a concerted effort with the national authorities to align the Framework with the country's second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper, which focuses on the following areas: peace consolidation, good governance and the rule of law; investment in human capital and the fight against HIV/AIDS; and promotion of sustainable and durable development.

XIII. Mission support

73. BINUCA received a budget of $18.1 million, which included provision for a fixed-wing aircraft to expand the mission's capability, outreach and geographic coverage. However, due to the prevailing security situation in the north-eastern region of Vakaga, BINUCA has not yet been able to open a regional office in Birao.

74. Also during the reporting period, the Office of the Controller approved the transfer of assets with a depreciated value of $1.3 million from MINURCAT to BINUCA. These assets included vehicles, telecommunications equipment, generators, engineering equipment and spare parts.

XIV. Observations

75. I commend all national stakeholders for the successful organization and peaceful holding of the presidential and legislative elections. However, the near absence of a political opposition in democratic institutions since the elections of 2011 represents a considerable challenge to the process of national reconciliation. It is vital for the sustainable and inclusive development of the Central African Republic to build robust democratic institutions where people, with their rich and diverse views and representing various communities, can work together to help to edify their nation. The political opposition must be given the space and the freedom

to express itself and to challenge Government policies within the norms of moral and legal behaviour.

76. Building on the lessons learned from the 2011 elections, no time should be lost in addressing the irregularities and shortcomings observed by national and international observers and the recommendations of the Constitutional Court. The recent establishment of a permanent, independent, professional body as part of the Independent Electoral Commission is an encouraging step. I urge the Government to address all outstanding problems in an inclusive manner and to ensure that the presidential and legislative elections in 2016 will be well prepared.

77. I urge the authorities to start planning for municipal elections as an important first step in continuing the democratization and decentralization process and the restoration of State authority throughout the country. It is important that the Government extend the rule of law into all the regions, together with security, which would ensure a stable and democratic environment for economic development.

78. Although the mandate of the Follow-up Committee has now expired, not all the recommendations of the inclusive political dialogue have been implemented. It is important for President Bozizé and his new Government to continue the work of healing the divisions in the country and uniting the people of the country. I urge the new Government to expedite the implementation of the outstanding recommendations arising from the inclusive political dialogue.

79. I reiterate my call to the Government and politico-military groups to move forward with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for stability in the country and to help advance economic recovery. Clarity regarding the resources required for the successful completion of the reintegration process is essential, and will make it possible to proceed with a robust disarmament and demobilization process in the country. As part of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, it is very important that the reintegration strategy have credibility among the politico-military groups and that it address their concerns as well as those of the conflict-affected communities, especially those facing threats from domestic and foreign rebels, bandits, poachers and LRA.

80. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration must also be linked to and accompanied by serious reform in the security sector to enable the defence and security forces to have both the capacity and the capability to provide security for all people of the Central African Republic. This must be done regardless of ethnic affiliation and the country must be protected from the threat of domestic and foreign rebels, bandits, poachers and LRA.

81. I wish to reiterate the importance of the Government developing a medium-term security sector reform strategy that builds on progress and lessons learned since the national seminar on security sector reform of April 2008. I encourage national authorities to re-establish the link between political-level interlocutors engaged in security sector reform and the technical-level actors, particularly the Permanent Technical Secretariat of the Security Sector Reform Steering Committee. Security sector reform should take place within a broad framework that includes the development of the rule of law and the strengthening of the judiciary. I strongly encourage bilateral and multilateral partners to support the country's security sector reform programme by pledging funds during the upcoming donor round table. The

success of the round table is very important and would assist the Government in further consolidating peace and accelerating early recovery and development.

82. As I have stressed in my previous reports, the Government must take serious action against the pervasive culture of corruption in the country. Corruption is a major factor in preventing socio-economic development at every level and in the failure to attract the investment necessary that would assist in developing the country. Even more importantly, the culture of impunity, which engenders human rights violations, must be vigorously addressed.

83. The situation of women and children remains dire. I strongly encourage the Government and the National Assembly to finalize and adopt the revised family code, which will further uphold the rights of women. I also urge the Government and the politico-military groups to develop and implement individual action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

84. I would like to express my appreciation for the contributions made by regional and international partners in support of the Central African Republic and for the additional support received during the electoral process, including from the Economic Community of Central African States, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, as well as from bilateral partners.

85. Finally, I would like to commend the staff of BINUCA for their hard work in a difficult environment under the leadership of my former Special Representative, Sahle-Work Zewde, and the entire country team for its efforts in support of consolidating peace in the Central African Republic. I would like to pay tribute to Ms. Zewde for the unfailing dedication and commitment with which she discharged her duties. Margaret Vogt, whom I appointed in May, takes up her new responsibilities as my Special Representative at a critical time when the country has just completed its second post-conflict electoral process.